

Legislation Helps Struggling Families Cover Health Costs

Washington, D.C. - Congressman John Adler voted today in support of H.R. 2, the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) Reauthorization Act, which passed by a vote of 289-139. The bipartisan bill preserves health coverage for seven million children already covered by SCHIP-including 150,277[1] children in New Jersey-and extends coverage to four million uninsured children who are currently eligible for, but not yet enrolled in, SCHIP and Medicaid.

"I am proud to back a plan that protects so many children whose parents work hard and play by the rules," said Adler. "This plan will help parents take their kids to the doctor when they first get sick, rather than "wait and see" if a cough or fever becomes something serious. We will now have healthier kids and reduce the number of uninsured families who use the emergency room as a doctor's office."

The SCHIP Reauthorization bill also improves benefits and quality of care and includes measures to phase out coverage of childless adults and parents. The program was created in 1997 to provide health care coverage for children in families that earn too much to qualify for Medicaid, but not enough to afford private insurance, and has proved a successful and cost-effective program for providing health care.

The bill is fully paid for with a 61-cent increase in the tobacco tax. Raising the tobacco tax also promotes children's health - by discouraging children from smoking. According to the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, a 61-cent increase in the tobacco tax means that 1,873,000 fewer children will take up smoking.

[1] Congressional Research Service, March 12, 2008